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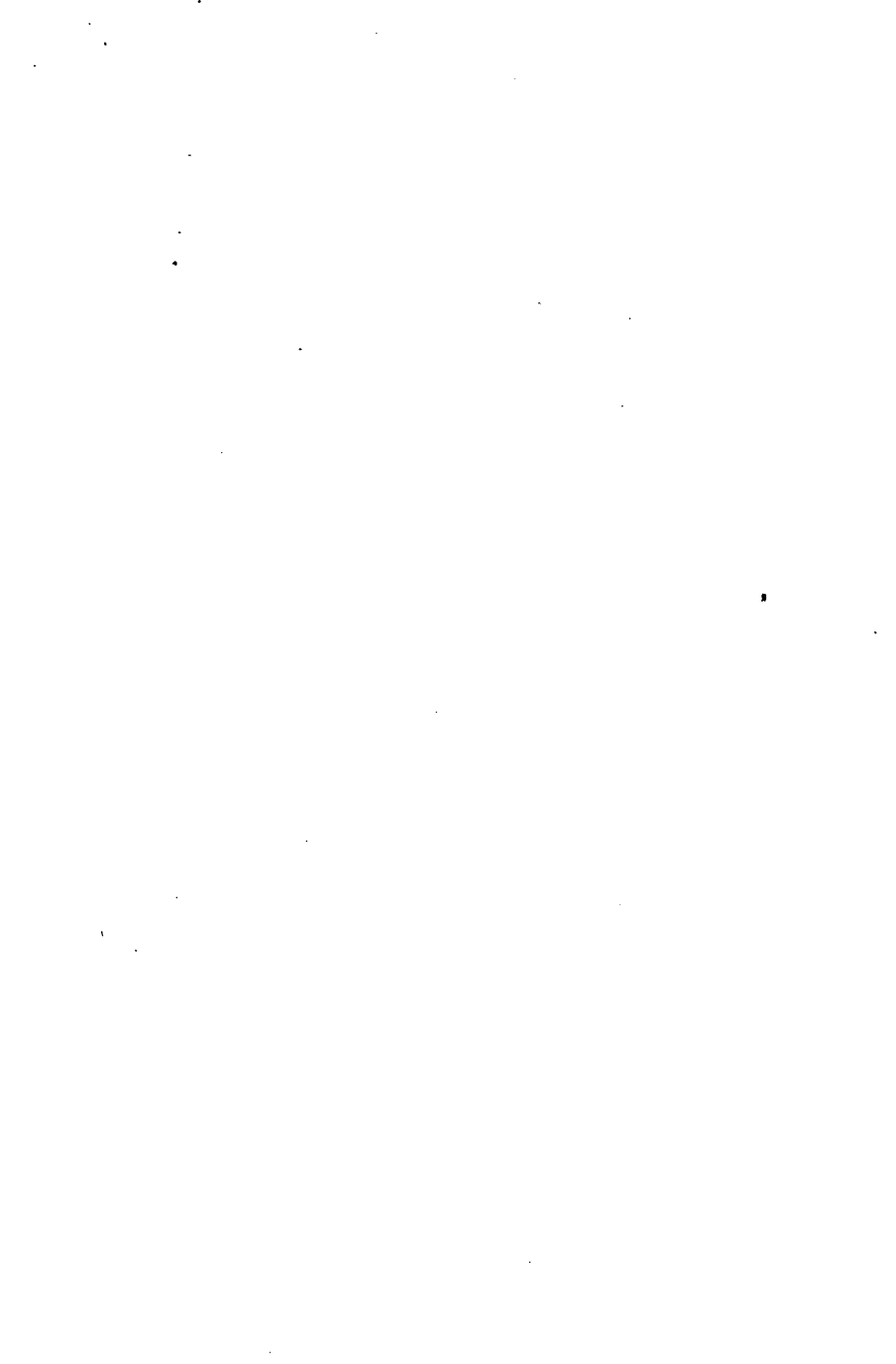
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# JACK - BY-THE HEDGE



A TRUE  
STORY











'I be a-waiting for my horse.'—Page 8.

# JACK-BY-THE-HEDGE

*A TRUE STORY*

BY

SELINA GAYE

AUTHOR OF 'COMING,' 'SMUTS AND DIAMONDS,' ETC.

*WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS*

SEELEY, JACKSON & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET  
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IN case the following little account of Jack's career should appear improbable, it may be as well to state that it was received, in outline, from a member of the family which befriended his early years. This outline, though filled in, has not been in any way altered ; but the names of all the characters introduced are fictitious.

S. G.

LONDON, *May*, 1883.



# JACK-BY-THE-HEDGE.



## I.

### JACK'S HORSE.

‘EH! you unlucky young dog! And what mischief be you up to now?’

The inquiry was addressed to a little boy of seven or eight years old, who was sitting in the hedge by the roadside, and doing, at that precise moment, nothing worse than whistle. But it was not the first time that he had heard it that evening; for it was market-day, and several of the women as they passed him on their way home had asked him the same question; while a farmer had raised his whip and threatened him with ‘a good dressing’ if ever he caught him breaking his hedges.

They all seemed to take it for granted that he

was 'after no good ;' but perhaps Jack was used to such speeches, for he did not seem either alarmed or offended, and only interrupted himself for a moment or two to make to each and all the same answer :

' I be a-waiting for my horse.'

He was an unusually handsome little fellow, with straight, sturdy limbs, a mop of curly, chestnut hair, a broad forehead, and dark, bright eyes, full of life and intelligence. But, with all his good looks, he was hatless and shoeless ; and was clothed, so far as he could be said to be clothed at all, in such a scanty and dilapidated set of rags as would hardly have sufficed to fit out a respectable scarecrow.

Father he had none, that he had ever known or heard of ; and as for his other parent—who lived in a wretched mud hovel, on a bit of waste land a little farther up the road—just now he preferred keeping out of her way ; for she had but lately come back from market, and at such times she was apt to be anything but pleasant company.

So Jack sat in the hedge whistling to himself, but in soft, low tones, that she might not find out where he was.

He was, as he had said, 'waiting for his horse.'

Not that little 'Jack-by-the-Hedge,' as he was nicknamed, had ever in his life owned any animal bigger than a kitten; but this horse was his by virtue of the fact that he remembered him as long as he remembered anything; and moreover, the horse's master had a way of sometimes tossing Jack a halfpenny or a cake, or a paper of bull's-eyes, which was uncommonly pleasant, and made their daily passing to and fro a matter of great interest.

Jack prided himself much on being able to distinguish the sound of *his* horse's hoofs from that of any other; and though two or three farmers, as well as the doctor and squire, all rode past him, he did not stir an inch from his place to look at them.

But presently he pricked up his ears and listened with all his might, while a smile broke over his sunburnt little face; and with a 'There he be!' he darted out of the hedge, just as a man on horse-back came round a bend in the road.

He had not made any mistake, and his smile expanded into a broad grin of satisfaction.

‘On the look-out for me, were you, Jack?’ said the gentleman kindly, as he pulled up his horse. ‘See here! can you manage a piece of ginger-bread?’

Jack’s eyes sparkled, and he fell upon the cake with such eagerness as was more than sufficient answer to the question.

‘Didn’t you get any dinner to-day?’ asked Mr. Lawrence, after watching him for a minute or two.

The boy shook his head.

‘Her was at market,’ said he, as soon as he could contrive to speak; ‘and her never leaves no meat, and a hanna been anigh her since her comed back. Her’s most always bad market-days, and her’d give I the stick if her could; but,’ and Jack looked up at his friend with a merry grin, ‘her canna! When her be like that, her canna get hold o’ I! and a just waits outside till a hears she a-snoring comfable!’

‘And what have you been doing with yourself to-day?’ asked Mr. Lawrence, anxious for the poor child’s own sake to talk of something else than his wretched mother.

‘Cutting brum on the hill, to make besoms,’ said Jack.

'Ah, that's right! I'm glad you've been at work. Idle boys generally turn out bad boys, you know; and I should be sorry for you to be a bad boy. Did you ever think, now, what you would like to be, when you grow up to be a man?'

'Ay!' answered Jack, without a moment's hesitation. 'A'd like to be a gemple, like you, master.'

'Indeed!' laughed Mr. Lawrence, as he looked down on the ragged little urchin. 'And pray why would you like to be like me?'

'A'd like to ha' ha'pence and gingerbread to give to poor boys as are clemmed,' was the answer, in a serious tone which went to the kind man's heart.

'There's some stuff in him, poor little chap!' he muttered to himself. Then aloud, he said: 'Well, now, you don't know your letters yet, I suppose?'

It seemed most unlikely; for there were no School Boards in those days, and Jack's mother was not a likely sort of person to think of giving her boy any schooling of her own accord.

Much to Mr. Lawrence's surprise, however, Jack at once pointed out and named correctly the letters stamped on the piece of gingerbread into which he was still diligently eating his way.

How he had learnt them was a mystery which



the boy himself could not explain ; but it seemed most likely that he had picked them up by hearing other children spell out such words as 'horse,' 'cart,' etc., from the notice-board at the neighbouring toll-gate.

But 'Jack's horse' did not approve of waiting when his head was turned homewards ; and he was now so impatient to be off that his master had to say 'Good-night' in a hurry.

Jack waited until his friends were out of hearing as well as out of sight, and until every crumb of the gingerbread was safely disposed of ; and then, the event of his day being over, he too went home.

Mr. Lawrence had passed the miserable, tumble-down cabin, which Jack called 'home,' some minutes before ; and as he did so, he had said to himself, not for the first time by a good many :

'That hole is a disgrace to the parish ! It is not fit even for pigs that one wishes to turn into wholesome bacon.'

How it happened that the place had been allowed to stand so long, no one quite knew ; but there it was, though the disreputable old man who had put it up had died some years ago, and it was now inhabited by his equally disreputable daughter.

He had occupied it so long as to have acquired a right to the ground on which it stood ; and though it had sometimes been urged that the one-roomed hovel, with its low roof and utter want of ventilation and drainage, really constituted a public nuisance and danger, no one had followed the matter up, and old Hughes was left to spend the rest of his days in defiance of all the laws of health, as he pleased.

Mr. Lawrence passed a good many children of one sort and another, in the course of his daily rides ; and he might never have noticed Jack more than the rest, but that, as he was passing one day, some years ago now, the child had toddled out unexpectedly into the very middle of the road, and had forthwith tumbled down under the horse's feet, before he had time to pull up.

Like most young men, Mr. Lawrence had not been in the habit of paying much attention to babies, whom indeed he had, until lately, been disposed to think of as all much alike. But he had a little son of his own now, which made a wonderful difference in his views on the subject ; and, as he anxiously felt the child all over to assure himself that there were no bones broken, he could not help

noticing what a bonny little fellow he was. He must be about the age of his own little Charlie, he thought ; but, as a matter of fact, he was some months younger, though vastly more independent, and at least as well grown.

‘ I say, is there no one to look after this child ? ’ shouted the lawyer, when he had satisfied himself that no harm was done, and that Jack’s loud cries had only meant that he was frightened.

But he had to shout several times before anyone appeared ; and when at last Mrs. Lloyd did show herself, it quite went against him to give the child up to her, so hard and coarse-looking was she.

‘ Little toad ! ’ was her motherly greeting, as she took him with an angry shake ; ‘ he be always a-squandering about and getting hisself into mischief. You’ll catch it, you mite ! ’

‘ He’ll get knocked down and killed, one of these days, if you don’t take better care of him,’ said Mr. Lawrence impressively.

‘ Eh ! and a release it would be to I ; so it would, indeed ! ’ was the careless answer. ‘ I shouldna shed many tears over un, I promise ye ! Poor folks as has to scratch for every morsel donna want many mouths to fill ; indeed they donna ! more particular

such a gorgeous child as him. In all my duration I never see such a child for his meat, never !'

'He's an uncommonly fine little fellow, and I should be proud of him if I were you,' said Mr. Lawrence, for Jack's own sake suppressing the indignation he felt.

And then he went on as fast as he could to his office, with her careless 'Ay, I dessay !' in his ears.

But all day, as he sat in his private room, seeing clerks and clients, and surrounded by law-books and papers, little Jack's large brown eyes would keep haunting him ; and when he set out homewards, he felt that he could not be quite easy without stopping a moment at the hovel to make quite sure that he was none the worse for the morning's adventure.

He could not go empty-handed, he thought ; and he would prefer to take something for little Jack's own self. But what ? He was not old enough to care much for anything that could not be eaten ; and little Charlie, at home, was by no means allowed to be fed promiscuously with everything his father thought he might like. Sponge-cakes ? Yes ; both mother and nurse allowed that sponge-cakes, in moderation, were comparatively

harmless, so they could not possibly hurt little Jack ; and the office-boy was forthwith sent out for a bagful.

Little Jack received his friend with a smile of recognition, and was soon busy with his cakes ; and Mrs. Lloyd, perhaps thinking that it might be to her advantage, was a little more civil than she had been in the morning, and actually promised to attend to Mr. Lawrence's suggestion that she should put a bit of board across the doorway, if she could not otherwise keep Jack within safe bounds.

But what a miserable hole it was for the child to be brought up in !—the entrance so low that any person of ordinary height would have to bend almost double to get in, and when inside would only just be able to stand upright ; while the one small window in what served as living and sleeping room, as well as kitchen, was evidently not made to open.

‘ I should think he'll die of it before long,’ was Mr. Lawrence's reflection, as he inhaled a deep draught of fresh air, and turned away disgusted with the filth and squalor.

But Jack did not die ! On the contrary, he throve and flourished ; and as Mrs. Lloyd had

taken the lawyer's advice and barricaded the doorway, he did not even get run over, which seemed his next most likely fate.

Having done this, however, his mother seemed to consider that nothing more could be expected of her; and when Mr. Lawrence looked in, as he sometimes did on his way to or from the town, he usually found the child sitting on the mud-floor, in an atmosphere which certainly ought to have poisoned him, according to all the sanitary authorities, and with no companions but a few cocks and hens, or perhaps a pig, when Mrs. Lloyd was able to buy one.

Not being burthened with friends, little Jack had speedily learnt to know the hours at which the lawyer passed, and would stand watching for him at the door. And when he grew older, and the obstructive board had been chopped up for firewood, he was generally to be seen sitting somewhere along the road, about the time that Mr. Lawrence rode by,

It was for this reason that people took to calling him 'Jack-by-the-Hedge,' a name also given in some parts of the country to the white hedge-

mustard which grows among rubbish and by the hedges and walls of almost every roadside.

The nickname was appropriate enough to the neglected little urchin, who had hardly more care bestowed on him than if he had actually been the weed after which he was named.

Thanks, however, no doubt to the fact that he spent all his days in the open air, he was growing up a particularly fine-looking boy, tall and strong of his age, and as brown as a gipsy.

Sometimes he cut broom and heather on the hill, or picked up wood and collected bracken; and in the summer he spent a good deal of time with his back against a gate, ready to open it for any visitors who might be on their way to a much-frequented ruin in the neighbourhood.

In this way he picked up a few halfpence honestly enough; and, in spite of the farmer's warning, and the not very civil remarks of the market-women, he had never yet been in any trouble, either for breaking hedges, stealing eggs or apples, or anything else.

Unfortunately, however, his mother did not bear a good character in the neighbourhood, and most



‘ With no companions but a few cocks and hens, and  
perhaps a pig.’—*Page 17.*





people took it for granted that Jack was sure to turn out badly, sooner or later.

'He is growing quite a big lad, and something ought to be done with him,' said Mr. Lawrence to himself, as he rode home on the particular evening of which we are speaking.

To tell the truth, he was so accustomed to seeing little Jack sitting about in the hedges, that he had not hitherto thought very much about it. He was a busy man too, with his head full of all sorts of things; and though he always felt an interest in the boy, it was not often that he found time to stop and talk with him.

But Jack's speech this evening had struck him; and again he said to himself:

'There's something in him, poor little chap! And it's a shame that he should be left to grow up like a gipsy, with that good-for-nothing mother of his, who will make him as bad as herself. We shall have him up before the magistrates for stealing before he's many years older, and then we shall have to send him to gaol, from which he will probably come out worse than he went in. Poor little Jack-by-the-Hedge! It seems hard that he shouldn't have a chance! If only he could be got

away from that wretched home, I believe he might be made something of ; and it *is* hard to send him to prison, without giving him a trial somewhere else first. *Hard?* It's a sin and shame in a Christian land! *Some* one ought to do something !

But when Mr. Lawrence reached this point in his meditations, as he not unfrequently did, he seldom stopped there ; and now, after his usual habit, he went on talking to himself :

'*Some* one? Well, if some one is wanted, you yourself are some one! What good reason is there against your being *the* some one whose business it is to see to this matter? Answer me that, Tom Lawrence, before you look about for anyone else to shift it off upon.'

The question lasted him all the rest of his ride ; but by the time he reached home, he had answered it satisfactorily.

There was *no* good reason why he himself should not 'be a neighbour' to the child ; and he had made up his mind that 'little Jack-by-the-Hedge *should* have a chance.'

## II.

### JACK TROTS INTO LIFE.

LITTLE Jack was in his accustomed place when Mr. Lawrence passed the next morning; but he did not expect more than a nod at that time of the day, for everybody but himself seemed to be in a hurry to get to work, so that he was rather surprised when 'his horse' stopped, and Mr. Lawrence called out :

‘Here, Jack, I want to speak to you !’

Jack was out of the hedge in an instant. Was it possible that there was more gingerbread forthcoming ?

But no ! there was something more astonishing than that ; for Mr. Lawrence said :

‘You are growing a big boy now, Jack ; how would you like to go to school, and learn your book like other boys ?’

‘Ay ; a’d like it fine, master ; and a’d like to be a gemple,’ said Jack sturdily.

‘Well, then, if your mother will let you come, I’ll take you home with me this very evening, and you shall learn to read and to be a good, useful man, I hope. Will you come?’

Jack’s answer was a delighted grin ; he was too much taken by surprise, just at first, to say anything to such a wonderful proposal.

‘You will have to work, you know,’ Mr. Lawrence went on good-naturedly. ‘Everybody must work at something, and I think you are big enough to be useful in the house and garden, and you shall have good clothes and plenty to eat, as you may tell your mother. Do you think she will let you come and try for a week?’

‘Ay ! her’ll be main glad to be rid o’ I. A’ll come ! And a can work right hard, a can.’

‘Well, then, I’ll come and speak to your mother as I come home ; and you must get your face and hands washed clean.’

It was of no use to tell him to put on his best clothes, for he had none.

Thereupon Mr. Lawrence rode off, leaving Jack in a most bewildered state of happiness. Many a time he had wondered where his horse and his friend went, as they passed him in the evening ;

and more than once, having nothing else to do, he had followed them along the road as fast as his legs would take him. But they were too quick for him, and he had always lost sight of them before he could satisfy himself. Now he was actually going to see !

The day was very long, though he did his best to shorten it by being as busy as he knew how. Still, even when he had cut and brought down as much heather and broom as his mother would use for some time to come ; when he had fetched several armsful of dried bracken as fresh litter for the pig ; and when, finally, he had washed his face and hands in the brook, to the very best of his ability—there was still much time to spare, and he had taken up his accustomed station in the hedge, a full hour too soon.

Jack had no clock to consult ; but he knew by the look of the sun that he was before his time, and resigned himself to waiting with what patience he might.

He was rather tired by this time, with all his exertions, and was glad to sit quiet and think of what was going to happen to him ; for it was very wonderful that, after knowing and watching the

horse and his master so long, he should now really be going home with them to wherever they lived. He could not in the least imagine what it would be like ; but, at all events, it would be a fine thing to have enough to eat. As for the clothes, they were quite a secondary consideration at present.

At last, but not before he had begun to grow rather uneasy, the well-known sound was heard. and Jack started up with even more than his usual alacrity.

‘ Ah, that’s right ! ’ said Mr. Lawrence, as he surveyed the ragged little figure before him. ‘ You’ve washed your face, I see. Now try whether you can hold my horse for a minute or two, while I speak to your mother.’

Jack’s face was crimson with delight as he took the bridle, for he had never had the honour of holding a horse before ; and, in spite of rags and bare feet, there was certainly not a prouder boy in the kingdom at that moment. Perhaps, indeed, in spite of the honour which came to him in after-years, this was, on the whole, the very proudest moment of his life !

He only wished that somebody—one of the farmers, for instance—would happen to pass by

and see him in his new glory ; but, unluckily, it did not happen to be market-day.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lawrence, standing well outside the hovel, had explained his errand, and offered to take Jack on trial, to do light work in the garden, clean knives, run errands, and make himself generally useful in any way that he could, promising that, if he were a good boy, he would keep him on altogether.

As he spoke, he noticed that the hovel was more filthy and tumble-down than ever, and that Mrs. Lloyd herself looked still coarser and more unpleasant than she had done a few years ago.

‘Eh, indeed!’ said she ungraciously. ‘Jack be all up in arms to go, he be ; donna think a mite about leaving his poor mother, as have slaved for un ; he’ve been enough to terrify the life out of I the whole of this blessed day, he have, for you’ve took his attention wonderful, ever since he were a little un. But,’ she went on with a whine, ‘he be getting a right tidy size now, he be, and he did ought to be a help to his poor mother. Hows’ever, I wouldna wish to disannul a gentleman as’ll be a friend to him.’

‘Then he may go home with me at once?’ said



Mr. Lawrence, anxious to cut the interview short ; and as she grumbled out some sort of assent, he said ' Good-evening,' and hurried away.

That she did not care a straw for the boy himself, and was only anxious not to lose his possible earnings, was so evident, that he did not scruple to take her at her word and carry him off at once.

In another minute, therefore, he had remounted his horse and was on his way home, with the boy trotting at his side and holding on by his stirrup. And thus it was that little Jack-by-the-Hedge trotted into life !

Neither of them ever forgot that journey as long as he lived ; and many a time Mr. Lawrence looked down on his ragged, barefooted little companion, wondering what his wife would think of him.

Fortunately for himself, Jack was troubled by no doubts as to his reception, or his toilet ; he was too full of wonder and curiosity to think about himself at all ; but he did feel a little awe-struck when they presently passed through one of the very gates through which he had peeped, and then went up a long drive with tall trees meeting overhead here and there, and, between them, glimpses of sloping

green lawns and bright flower-beds, and, at the end, a large old-fashioned red-brick house.

Mrs. Lawrence was standing on the doorstep, wondering what little beggar her husband had allowed to follow him home; and, as the horse was led off, she looked at him for an explanation.

'Make a bow to the lady, Jack,' said he with a smile, which she understood to mean that he would tell her all about it presently.

'Jack is coming to help in the garden,' he went on; 'and he is going to work hard and learn his book, and be a good boy; aren't you, Jack?'

'Ay, a be,' answered Jack, glancing at Mrs. Lawrence with some awe, for she seemed to him a very grand lady indeed, something like a queen, she was so tall and stately, though she looked at him very kindly too.

But what was to be done with him? for, in spite of his efforts at the brook, poor child, he was, it must be confessed, still very dirty, much too dirty to be admitted into a respectable kitchen. Moreover, cook was just in the act of 'dishing up,' and would be seriously 'put about' if such a little ragamuffin were brought into her spotless premises;

and the servants'-hall—no ; that would be just as bad ; he was much too dirty and disreputable to be taken there ; no respectable servant could be expected to like it ; and besides, they were all busy just now, too, about the dinner.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Lawrence good-humouredly, when his wife, having drawn him on one side, out of Jack’s hearing, had put all these difficulties before him ; ‘well, my dear, he can sit out here on the grass then, till we settle what is to be done with him ; he can’t hurt *that* ! But perhaps Jones will be ordering him off, if I don’t ask leave first ! Poor little chap ! he is just about the age of our Charlie ; and, judging by him, I should say he must be extremely hungry after his long trot. I suppose he can have something to eat out here, any way ; and by-and-by, if no one else can be found to give him a tub, why I will myself.’

‘Poor little fellow !’ said Mrs. Lawrence gently, as she thought of her own son, who was now a schoolboy, and many a mile away from her ; ‘poor little fellow ! I dare say he *is* hungry, and he would be quite nice-looking if he were clean and tidy. But you had better leave him to me, and I will see that he is looked after, and has something



‘She seemed to him a very grand lady indeed, something like a queen,  
she was so tall and stately.’—*Page 29.*



to eat ; and if he is to help in the garden, I should say Jones had better *not* see him just yet !'

'Very well,' said Mr. Lawrence ; 'then I'll go and dress. Now, Jack, my boy, this lady is your mistress, and she will be very good to you, and you must do all she tells you.'

A few minutes later Jack was devouring such a supper as he had never enjoyed before ; and, as the pudding and bread disappeared, as if by magic, Mrs. Lawrence only hoped that he would not be the worse for it the next day, for he was more ravenous even than Charlie ; and that was saying a good deal.

Later in the evening, when Mr. Lawrence went round to the stable, as was his habit, he quite started, and for an instant thought it must be his own little son whom he saw standing there, patting the horse and looking so much at home ; for, in the meantime, Jack had had a bath, with such soaping and scrubbing as he had never known in his life before ; and now that his old rags were gone, and he was dressed in a cast-off suit of Charlie's, no one would have recognised him for little Jack-by-the-Hedge, unless they had known him as well as Mr. Lawrence did.

'And what do you think of doing with him ?'

asked Mrs. Lawrence, an hour or two later, when she had seen Jack comfortably in bed. 'He is *more* than nice-looking, Tom; he is downright handsome, now that his hair has been cut close, and one can see what a good forehead he has. Really, with those short brown curls and bright eyes, he is as pretty a boy as I have seen.'

'I don't think there will be much difficulty in finding work for him. Jones is graciously pleased to think he can do a job of weeding, and James will teach him to clean boots and knives, and cook has no objection to his having his meals in the kitchen; in fact, the maids seem so smitten with him, that the only danger is of his getting too much attention. I have promised him that he shall go to school, and he seems anxious to learn; but of course, after running wild as he has done, it will be too much for him to go all day at first. Besides, though reading and writing are all very well, it is much more important that he should learn to be obedient and industrious and to keep himself clean and tidy.'

'He certainly is a very winning little fellow, and I think he would make a nice page by-and-by, when he is bigger.'

‘Well, my dear, I am glad you have taken to him; but don’t spoil him among you, for that would be no kindness—very much the reverse. He must learn to earn his own living in one way or other, as soon as he can; but the main thing is to try and make a good, honest man of him, for he has had anything but a good example before him.’

‘Yes, poor child; I suppose he has not even been baptized, and he seems to be as ignorant as a heathen. He did not seem to know in the least what I meant when I asked if he said his prayers.’

‘I suppose not. It is as well that Charlie is not at home just now, for he does so long for companions that it would be quite impossible to keep them apart, and poor little Jack may have bad habits that I don’t know of. But by the time the holidays come we shall be able to tell what sort of boy he is, and whether it will be safe to trust them together. After all, his mother may choose to take him away; though if she does, I think I shall see whether the parish can’t interfere, for she is certain to be the ruin of him, and she is perfectly well able to earn her own living without his help. Already the farmers and neighbours are suspicious of him,



simply because he is his mother's son, and in another year or two it would have a very bad effect upon him, and he would almost certainly fulfil their expectations. Give a dog a bad name, and you may as well hang him !'

But when, at the end of the first week, Mr. Lawrence stopped again at the hovel to report that Jack was a good boy, and quite happy, and might remain at the Grove if she liked, he found, to his surprise, that the place was deserted. Mrs. Lloyd had disappeared a day or two after he had taken Jack away, and no one knew whither she had gone; but it was quite evident that she had no intention of reclaiming her child, or of troubling herself any more about him. She was never seen in the neighbourhood again; but some months after it came to Mr. Lawrence's knowledge that she had betaken herself to a town a few miles off, and had there died.

Jack was therefore left entirely to the care of his friends, and an altogether new and wonderful life began for him.

He went regularly to the village school; but at first only for a short time daily, as his master and mistress thought it would be hard for him to sit

still for very long together, after being accustomed to wander about in the fields and lanes all day.

Strange to say, however, in spite of the gipsy life he had led, Jack took to his book, and very soon learnt to read fairly well; and in a few months he was not only quite as forward as the other boys of his age, but was so eager to improve that he seemed likely to outstrip them altogether before long.

He was also learning other things which were of far more consequence than the knowing how to read, though of course that was a very good thing in its way; and though Mrs. Lawrence was pleased to hear how he got on, she was far more glad to see how attentive he was when she told him about the Father in heaven, who had watched over him and cared for him, and brought him to this happy home.

It was all quite new to poor Jack, for no one before had ever told him anything about God; but he liked to listen and to hear his mistress read to him out of the Bible; and after a time, when he had been properly taught, he was brought still nearer to Him, for he was taken to Church to be

baptized and made 'a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.'

His master and mistress were his godfather and godmother, and they gave him the name of 'John'; but he was still commonly called Jack.

When he was not at school, Jack helped Mr. Jones in the garden, worked in a little piece of ground which had been given him for his own, and learnt to help James to clean knives and boots. All the servants, as well as the schoolmaster, gave him a good character; he had, moreover, quite lost his rough way of speaking, had learnt to say 'sir' and 'ma'am' when he answered anyone, and was altogether respectful and well-behaved, so that when Charlie Lawrence came home for the holidays, his father and mother felt that the two boys might safely be trusted together.

Jack was, of course, still very ignorant, but he was not bad; and there was no danger of Charlie's learning bad words or ways from him.

As for Charlie, he was so delighted to have a boy of his own age to play with, that Jack's ignorance of book-learning did not trouble him in the very least. On the contrary, he told his mother that Jack was much better fun than any of the boys at school, for there was not a bird that he did

not know by its note or its nest, and he knew, too, just where each was likely to build. Jack, too, could make brooms and whistles and weave rush-baskets, and could run like a hare and climb like a squirrel; so that altogether he was a most desirable holiday-companion; and if he did not know the Kings of England, and had never so much as heard of the Latin Grammar, what did it matter, when he was such a capital hand at fishing and knew all the best ponds and blackberry hedges?

Jack had led a very solitary life until he came to the Grove; for careful fathers and mothers had not allowed their children to play with him, and he had never had a friend of his own age, or, indeed, of any age; so that he was quite devoted to Charlie Lawrence, and ready to wait upon him from morning till night. He looked up to him, too, with immense respect, as some one altogether superior to himself, when Charlie showed him his school-books and talked rather big about the hard lessons he had to learn; and he was never so happy as when he could persuade Master Charlie to read him a few pages out of a book which had lately been given him.

There were very few story-books, or, indeed, children's books of any kind, in those days, and

this book, which gave an account of the various countries of the world, would probably be called 'dry and stupid' by most boys now. Jack, however, found it extremely interesting, and even Charlie liked to read of the wonderful birds and animals which were to be found in countries far away. In fact, they both made up their minds that when they grew up they would set out together on a voyage of discovery, and see some of these wonders for themselves.

It was a sad day for Jack when the time came for Master Charlie to go back to school; and more than one tear dropped on the boots he was polishing so carefully as he thought that he should not have them to do again for some months to come.

However, he cheered up again in a little while, thanks to having plenty to do for the said Master Charlie, who had left his rabbits and his garden in Jack's especial charge, and had also trusted him with the book of travels, to his great delight. Whenever he had nothing else to do, Jack hammered away at this book so diligently, that he was soon able to read it without any trouble; and when he had read it all through to the end he went back to the beginning, and read it through again, and was never tired of it.

### III.

#### JACK'S BUTTONS.

THERE is not much to be said about the next three or four years of Jack's life at the Grove.

Like other boys, he sometimes had his idle fits, and sometimes he was careless ; but on the whole he was a good boy, and worked steadily. Every one gave him a good character, and he was a general favourite, because he was always civil and obliging.

He was growing quite a tall, strong boy now : but Mr. Jones did not have very much of his help in the garden, for as he got on well at school, and seemed very anxious to learn, his master, who took a great interest in him, had soon allowed him to go both morning and afternoon. And Jack had certainly made the most of his time ; for he could write a neat, clear hand, could read anything that came in his way, could spell correctly, and had learnt to keep accounts very fairly. Besides all

this, he knew the Kings of England, at least as well as Master Charlie himself; and in the evenings he had read two or three instructive books, which Charlie had pronounced 'too dull for *any* body to read out of school,' so that altogether he had acquired a good deal of information which might be useful to him some day.

But it must not be supposed that Jack had turned into a dull, stupid boy, because he was so fond of his books. Quite the contrary: he was just as bright and merry-looking as ever; and though he very much liked hearing about the lessons Master Charlie did at school, he enjoyed a good game as well as anyone.

He was about twelve years old now; and though Mr. Lawrence wished to give him all the opportunities of improving himself that he could, and was really much pleased with his progress, he was beginning to think seriously that it was high time Jack should leave school, and set about earning his own living in some way or other.

The question was, whether he should be put under Mr. Jones, and be brought up to be a gardener, or whether he should learn to help James, who was groom, coachman, and footman, all in one.

Now, Mr. Jones declared that he had no fault to find with the boy ; and yet it was clear that he did not particularly wish to have Jack under him.

‘He hasna got it in him, sir, as one may say,’ said he, when Mr. Lawrence pressed him for his reason. ‘He be a hard-working little chap as ever I see, that he be, more especial when he’ve got a job as suits him. Every hair on his head be worth six-pence, then. Now he’ve writ all the labels out for the new rose-trees as nice as can be, which I’m no scholar myself—and he makes no trouble of it. But we canna always be a-writing labels, and when it comes to a job o’ weeding, he isna not to say lazy, not at all, but it’s like as he were a-studying all the time ; and he do bring out such questions as fair beat I, they do, and I be all of a twitter lest he should pull up the young carrots and such, in the place o’ weeds. No, sir, I donna know as he often *have* made a mistake, for he be mostly careful ; but it do play upon I, that it do, when there be any-thing particular going forward ; and in times I be forced to tell un to hold his tongue !’

‘Quite right too, Jones, if he talks too much,’ said his master, smiling.

‘Well, now,’ said Mr. Jones, in the slow, deliberate



way which was usual with him, ' well, now, I mind onest, when we was a-digging potatoes, and he were right on all the time about the gentleman as first brought 'em from foreign parts ; and he were a-telling I as how in old times there were no garden stuff much in common use but carrots and parsneps, and cabbages ; it donna hardly seem likely, do it now ? but he said he see it in a printed book of Master Charlie's, and there isna no going agen that, be there, sir ? though how poor folks could live without potatoes, I canna tell—indeed I canna ; and the poor missis, I'm thinking, she'd be wholly lost without the beans, and peas, and artichokes, and sparrow-grass, and such, and so I told him. And it fair 'mazed I to think what the gardens could look like in those times. And then he says, " Mr. Jones," says he, quite serious and respectful, " donna you think as there may be other roots in foreign parts, roots as 'd be as good for the part as potatoes ? When Master Charlie and me be grown men, us means to go and see, and then us can bring 'em home to you to grow in the garden, and maybe some wonderful, beautiful flowers besides, as'll make your fortune." Ay, it were just like a printed book to hear him talk



'He do bring out such questions as fair beat I, they do.'—*Page 43.*



about they foreign parts, for all the world as though he had been and seen it all. But, sir, how be a poor body as never had no schooling to mind his work, with suchlike talk a-going on constant? It be enough for I to study the missis's cabbages, and the pot-herbs, and so on, without bothering my head about outlandish places as canna be no concern o' mine. Not but what I be partial to the lad ever sin' he first come about the place, and if it be your pleasure to have him stay here, I'll do my duty by un; but if you'll excuse my making so bold, I doubt he wonna make much of a gardener, he be too fond on his book !'

'The fact is,' said Mr. Lawrence, laughing, as he repeated this conversation to his wife, 'the fact is, Jack is a little too much for poor Jones; and no wonder, seeing that he never had a week's schooling in his life, and I have no doubt the boy's questions do bother him a good deal. I don't myself see why Jack's love of books should prevent his being a good gardener; but if Jones thinks *he* does, we must contrive something else. What shall it be?'

'Make a page of him, I should say,' said Mrs. Lawrence. 'James wants help in the stable, and he and Sarah can teach him to wait at table. He is

such a nice-looking boy, he would look well in buttons ; and the servants are all fond of him, and won't mind the trouble of teaching him. He might still go to Mr. Allen's night-class in the winter, for it would be a pity he should lose what he has learnt. Sometimes, do you know, I think he will turn out quite a clever man, he is so fond of reading instructive books ; much fonder than Charlie, I am sorry to say. But what is better still, I believe him to be a really good boy ; the servants say they have never known him tell a lie, or take the smallest thing that didn't belong to him. His worst fault is carelessness ; but, after all, he is but young ; and perhaps as Jones says, it is that he is "studying," thinking of something else than what is before him, for those travels and voyages, not to mention "Robinson Crusoe," do seem to have taken a great hold of his mind. I can't find that he neglects his work, however ; indeed, the servants would not allow him to do so, and the books are never taken out till the evening, when everything is done.'

'That's right ; as long as he does not neglect his work, the books will do him no harm—in fact, they will keep him out of mischief.'

'Yes; and indeed I think it is much better for the maids to hear a few pages of "Robinson Crusoe" than to sit gossiping over their needle-work about what goes on in the village. Really, when one looks at Jack now, it is difficult to believe that he is the same ragged little urchin you brought home, or that that wretched woman was his mother.'

'Yes; there is no doubt Jack is a fine-looking boy,' said Mr. Lawrence with a smile, for he was fond and proud of the boy, and pleased to think that his experiment had answered so well. 'So you want him for a page?' he went on. 'I don't know that he could do much better, at all events for the next year or two. Those sharp-witted boys don't always turn out as clever as one expects, and—yes, it would be a pity to put grand ideas into his head. "Doe the next thinge," as old somebody says—that is the best motto for him, and, indeed, for all of us. I am sure when I took Master Jack-by-the-Hedge into my service, I had not a notion what I was going to make of him; but the one thing was to get him away from that woman at all costs, before she made him as bad as herself. That we have done, and we must leave

the future to take care of itself, or rather to be taken care of for us.'

'Were you thinking of anything in particular, Tom?' asked Mrs. Lawrence, a little surprised at the way in which her husband spoke.

'Well, my dear, to tell you the truth,' said he, 'since Jack has got on so well at school, it has crossed my mind several times that I should like to have him in the office. A clerk in whom I could have full confidence would be a great comfort to me; but it could not be for another year or two, and therefore it is better not to put the idea in his head. He could not earn enough to keep himself by copying, at present; and if anything were to happen to me, he would feel it a hardship, perhaps, to go back to service, whereas now "buttons" will be great promotion, no doubt. In another year or two we shall see better what he is fit for, and then I will do the best I can for him.'

So it was settled! Jack was taken into the town to be measured for his page's suit; and very grand indeed he felt, when he was mounted on the carriage-box by the side of James, ready to get down and open gates, ring bells, and do anything

else that might be wanted, when his mistress went out driving and shopping.

The hovel in which he had passed his earliest years had so entirely disappeared by this time, that it was difficult to say precisely even where it had stood ; and he himself, in his smart hat, and long, warm greatcoat with the silver buttons which were the pride of his heart, was as unlike the hatless, shoeless little Jack-by-the-Hedge as it was possible to be.

Yet, strange to say, the comfortable coat was much more near being the death of him than ever his old scanty rags had been.

And this was how it happened.

He had worn the said coat with much comfort and satisfaction for above a fortnight, it being, as James said, 'very embracing weather for the time of year,' when one unlucky day it came to his ears that the village boys had been discussing him and his appearance among themselves, and had come, or professed to come, to the conclusion that the beautiful greatcoat covered very little besides Jack himself. He might, perhaps, have a shirt on, but certainly nothing more.

Now Jack felt bound to resent this as an insult



to his master and mistress ; but it was all in vain that he spoke of his jacket and buttons, for, as he wore his old things when he went into the village on any errand, they did not happen to have seen him in his finery, and the more they saw it teased him to have its existence doubted, the more of course they persisted.

‘Eh ! Jack, we shanna believe ye, lad, till we see un,’ said one, in such a very provoking tone, that Jack, who was usually very good-tempered, nearly flew at him in a rage ; but happily recollecting himself just in time, kept his fists to himself, and merely answered, ‘And you *shall* see ! The very next time our carriage comes through the village, I’ll learn you not to jeer at my master and missis ! As if they’d keep a page with nothing but a great-coat on !’

‘Eh ! lad, donno you put yourself about,’ said the other mischievously. ‘The master and missis isna nought to me, they isna ! What do they give ye such a big coat for, if it isna to cover ye ?’

But Jack walked off without condescending to make any answer ; and for the next day or two he was so particularly anxious to hear what orders Mrs. Lawrence had given about driving, and where

she was likely to be going, that at last James thought proper to administer a snub, and told him 'not to be quizzing into things as were no concern of his, for it wasna becoming in a young chap like him.' Thereupon Jack held his tongue, but he was all ears, nevertheless; and at last one morning he had the satisfaction of hearing that his mistress was going to make a call some four or five miles off, on the other side of the village.

Here was his opportunity of upholding the honour of the family!

It was bitterly cold, for the wind had got into the east; but that did not matter, provided he could see his enemy, and convince him of his foolishness to his face. So Jack started without his greatcoat, and with his smart jacket fully displayed; and he had the satisfaction of knowing that Ben had a full view of it, for he was standing at the door of the workshop as the carriage drove through the village. Moreover, on seeing him, Mrs. Lawrence remembered that she had a message for his father, the carpenter, and told James to stop.

While Ben's father was talking to Mrs. Lawrence, Ben lolled at the door, glancing up at Jack and

making sundry grimaces, as much as to say, 'Oh my ! ain't we fine?'

But James's presence prevented his making any rude remarks aloud, and as for Jack, he knew his manners too well to think of saying anything. Besides, now that he had proved Ben to be in the wrong, there was nothing more to say ; and he was far too much impressed with the dignity of his position to return Ben's grimaces, or indeed to look as if he were made of anything else but wood, and could neither see nor hear.

He was feeling uncommonly cold by this time, however ; but he tried to forget it and to comfort himself with the reflection that now all the village would be sure to know that the jacket was a real fact ; which of course was a great thing gained, at least in his eyes and at that moment. He thought rather differently about it before long.

It was quite worth enduring a little cold for, but yet it did not prevent his shivering now and then ; and when Mrs. Lawrence reached the house of her friend, he was quite glad to jump down from his perch and have a chance of getting a little warmth into his feet.

He hoped too, with all his heart, that a message

would be sent out, as sometimes happened, telling James to take the carriage round to the stable ; for then there would be a chance of their getting invited into the warm kitchen or servants'-hall.

But there was no such luck to-day ; and as he was ashamed to ask James to let him take a run down the drive, there was nothing for him but to stand about and stamp his feet as often as he could without attracting notice.

Still, he was very cold ; and when, at the end of one of the longest half-hours he had ever known, Mrs. Lawrence re-appeared, he looked so pinched and blue that she noticed it, and said :

‘ Why, Jack, you look cold ; why don’t you put on your coat ? ’

‘ Please, ma’am, I didn’t want it to-day,’ said Jack, touching his hat, and wishing in his heart that he had at least thought of bringing it with him, so that he might have put it on when they were clear of the village.

‘ Well, I don’t think that was wise, with this cold wind,’ said his mistress.

And then she got into the carriage, and if she thought any more at all about the matter, it was only to say to herself that ‘ she supposed boys did

not feel the cold as other people did ; for Charlie had an extraordinary dislike to his greatcoat, and could hardly be induced to put it on except on Sunday.

When Jack reached home, he had to bustle about as usual, helping Sarah to lay the table ; and what with this and the large fires in the kitchen and dining-room, he soon got warm again.

In the middle of the night, however, he was awakened by a sharp pain in his side and chest, which there was no getting rid of, turn and twist as he might. He had never felt anything like it before in his life ; and he was rather frightened and very miserable, for he could hardly breathe, and the pain went through him like the stab of a knife.

He lay awake several hours wondering what could be the meaning of it, and never dreaming that the going without his greatcoat could have anything to do with it. How could he possibly suppose he had caught cold, when he was so burning hot that he did not know what to do with himself?

He tossed restlessly about until it was time for him to get up, and then he tried bravely to go about his work as usual, hoping that he should feel better when he had had his breakfast.

But it would not do ; and before Mrs. Lawrence came downstairs, cook had found him curled up in a corner, crying with pain and hardly able to speak or move, and had forthwith sent him back to his bed, with orders to stay there until she came to him.

It was not long before she brought him a cup of hot herb-tea, which was by no means nice ; but poor Jack drank it thankfully to the last drop, hoping that, as she said, ' it would be sure to make him quite well.'

But when Mrs. Lawrence came to see him, as she soon did, it was quite plain to her more experienced eyes that Jack was too seriously ill to be cured by herb-tea, and she sent at once for the doctor, whose remedies were much more severe.

What with leeches and blisters and very nasty medicine, poor Jack had a most dismal time of it for the next few days ; and when, as he grew a little better, his mistress told him that all this pain had been caused by his going without his coat and catching cold, Jack began to think that it was not such a great thing after all to have proved Ben in the wrong ; and that at all events it was certainly not worth suffering so much for.

## IV.

### A GREAT SECRET.

IT was weeks before Jack was able to leave his bed, and weeks more before he was strong enough to do his work or go out with the carriage ; but the servants were all good-natured to him, and as soon as the pain was gone and he was able to sit up, Mrs. Lawrence gave him pictures to cut out and paste on brown paper, to make a scrap-book ; so that, though he longed to be up and out again, he was less dull than might have been expected.

When the pictures were finished she let him help her in writing out various recipes in her recipe-book ; and then in making a fresh catalogue of the books in the master's library ; all of which Jack felt to be a very great honour, and took great pains to do as well as possible.

‘ And really,’ said she to her husband, as she showed him Jack's handiwork, ‘ really, it is a little mortifying, I must say, to see what a much better

hand he writes than Charlie, though he has had so much less schooling. I should have been afraid to ask Charlie to help, for he would have made so many blots and mistakes that I know the page would have had to be cut out ; and now, just look at this ! not a mistake or a smudge anywhere, and all written out as clean and clear as copper-plate !'

'Yes,' said Mr. Lawrence, as he took the book with a smile, for he was proud of Jack and pleased to see his improvement ; 'very good indeed ; quite cut out for a clerk. And James tells me he writes on cook's jam-pots and pickle-jars, and I know he makes out the stable accounts. Well, perhaps I shall have him in the office one of these days. I must say he has never disappointed me yet ; but, my dear, I don't think we shall be disappointed in our own boy either. He is a good little fellow, even if he is not as fond of books as our studious page, and people have not all the same gifts. There was a great improvement in his last report, and I think you will see that it will go on. Most boys write badly at his age ; I know I did myself, thanks to the number of impositions I had to do. But there is one thing about Charlie which is



worth any amount of cleverness—he is thoroughly good-hearted and simple-minded, and I like to see the interest he takes in Jack. Some boys, I am afraid, would be rather jealous of him; but I strongly suspect that Charlie gives him private lessons when he is home, for one day when I was in the stable I overheard Master Jack declaiming a piece of the Latin grammar. Where he got his turn for learning, I can't imagine; but perhaps it won't last.'

For the next year or two Jack continued to be page at the Grove, and was allowed to go two or three times a week to an evening class held by the schoolmaster, which was attended by some of the farmers' sons in the neighbourhood. There were no regular night-schools then, such as there are in most places now; and though many National School boys are better taught in these days than Jack was, yet, thanks to his master and mistress, he had many more advantages than most boys in his station at that time.

On the whole, James and Sarah gave him a very good character; but occasionally, and especially at first, he earned several good scoldings from James, who was very strict, and being much older, and

considering it his duty to appear deaf to anything that might be said when he was waiting at table, unless it was said to himself, was very wroth with Jack for forgetting to hand sauces and keeping his mistress waiting for her vegetables, because he was listening to something that interested him.

‘You’ll be joining in next, I shouldna wonder, and telling the master and mistress what *you* think,’ said James sarcastically. Whereupon Jack looked and felt much ashamed of himself, and promised to be more attentive. And he did try, for he was really anxious to please James and all who were over him; and besides, he had learnt his Catechism by this time, and knew that to be careless and inattentive about what James and Sarah told him, was not “ordering himself lowly and reverently to all his betters,” or “submitting himself to his masters.”’

Waiting well at table might seem a little thing; but then how often he had been taught that nothing was really small, if it was done in a right spirit, and how often he had had to write those words, ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’

Certainly it was uncommonly difficult not to

listen and be interested, and he sometimes wished he could be deaf for the time, instead of hearing scraps of things which excited his curiosity, and set him thinking and wondering and wishing to hear more, and then too often made him so far forget what he was about that he gave hot plates instead of cold, or handed apple-sauce with boiled beef !

But, by dint of trying, he learnt to wait and do his other duties very well in time ; and he hoped that when he grew up he might be just such a good, useful man-servant as James, for he knew that his master trusted and respected him, and he felt that he should like to be trusted and respected too, though it must be many years before he could expect to be thought anything like the same of as James, who had lived in the Lawrence family all his life, and had known the master when he was a boy. He must have waited at table a great, great many times, and he must have cleaned more boots and knives than it would be possible to count, before he had come to be so looked up to as he was now ; but he had done it, and others might do the same.

Jack seldom troubled his head about the future,

for he was happy and contented where he was ; but whenever he did think about the years to come, it was with the hope that he might be Master Charlie's servant all his life, and that they might go and see some of the wonderful foreign lands they had read about together.

From the first he had been devoted to Charlie, and would gladly have gone anywhere and done anything for him ; and now he looked forward more and more eagerly to the holidays. For he and his young master had a grand scheme, which no one else was supposed to know anything about, and it interested them both immensely.

Charlie had proposed to teach him Latin, and to give him lessons in higher branches of arithmetic than Mr. Allen thought it necessary to teach his pupils.

Jack had felt much flattered by the proposal, for he liked to understand something of what Master Charlie was doing ; but he had hesitated a little, 'For,' said he, 'I don't know what James and the master might say to it, Master Charlie. You see, James says these things are not for such as him and me, but only for gentlemen like you and the master.'

‘Stuff!’ said Charlie disrespectfully, but a little puzzled what other answer to make.

After a minute, however, his face cleared, for a happy thought had struck him.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘I don’t suppose they would be much use to James or to the boys in the village, and I’m sure I shouldn’t care to teach any of them; but you’ll *have* to know things, Jack, if you go with me to make discoveries, because I shall want you to be my secretary as well as servant. And you’ll have to write down all sorts of difficult things, I can tell you; and very likely some of them will be in Latin—learned things are always written in Latin; so you see, you must learn it.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said Jack, quite ready to be convinced, ‘if you think the master won’t mind.’

Charlie was quite clear that his father would not mind; and so holidays by holidays he had gone on teaching Jack, and had soon found that by teaching him and making things clear to him, he learnt a great deal himself, and got on far better at school in consequence.

The holidays were, of course, a great delight to Jack; but it was at those times that he got into most trouble with James, and he was sometimes

rather puzzled as to whose orders were to be attended to first, his or Master Charlie's. Master Charlie had no doubts at all, and he supposed he must be right, but at the same time he was not quite comfortable about it. Master Charlie was certainly one of his 'masters' and 'betters,' if James was another; and as he could not help loving Master Charlie best, James sometimes came rather badly off.

James put up with it for a long time; he and Sarah having agreed that, as the young master was not at home for many weeks in the year, they supposed he must be humoured.

But at last, when things had gone on in this way for a couple of years or so, they came to a crisis one day in the holidays, when James, having been tried a little too far by the claims which Master Charlie made on Jack's time, at last made a formal complaint to his master.

'For indeed, sir,' said he, 'I wish the boy well, and so does every one of the servants; but when Master Charlie's at home, he's not like the same—it's just as though he were in an eclipse like. Master Charlie always has taken his attention so much, and then he sets so much by Jack, and it's

“Jack here” and “Jack there” all day long, and nobody canna do naught right but Jack, so that me and Sally canna get scarce anything out of him ; and it isna the work we mind, sir, as you know, but it’s ruining of him for a servant, that it be. One while it’s “James, you can spare Jack to go fishing?” and another, “James, we want Jack for cricket or bowls.” And I’m not against a little harmless sport in moderation, in especial if it be to oblige Master Charlie, which I’m sure there be no one wish to please him more than me, and a game on the green is all very well ; but what I look at is the things that Jack gets thinking of, and that’ll be no manner of use to him. He is not to say set up, and he never answers me back when I speak to him sharp, that I will say ; but he do get his head stuffed full of tales as may be all very well for Master Charlie and the other young gentlemen, meaning no disrespect to ’em, but they’ll be no good to *him*. And then, sir, if you’ll believe me, even when he be about his work, in general he is right on a-muttering the most outlandishest words, which they be quite out of place in the stable and pantry ; and says I to him, “Jack, if so be as you want to talk in that fashion, so as no one canna

understand ye, better set up for a gentleman at onest, for ye'll never make a servant." And then he says to me, "If you please, it's something as Master Charlie give me to learn for him"; and to be sure Master Charlie has him in his study by the hour together.'

'Well, James, I will speak to Master Charlie; and for the future, if he wants Jack when it is inconvenient to spare him, you must say "No." While Jack is under you and Sarah, he is to obey your orders, as I shall make him understand,' said Mr. Lawrence, thinking to himself, however, that it really was a difficult position for Jack, and that it was not surprising he should be rather perplexed as to his duty.

'Thank you, sir; only I don't want to bring no one into trouble, sir,' said James, relenting the moment that he found his master ready to uphold his authority. 'I know it's a denial to Master Charlie not to have a companion, and I'm quite agreeable to spare Jack, and so is Sally, in reason, or altogether, if it be your wish. It isna the work I look at, but the lad hisself.'

'No, James; I understand. You were quite right to speak, and if you had let me know sooner



about it, it might have been mended sooner. Where is Jack now ?

‘Well, sir,’ said James reluctantly, ‘I havena seen him for the last half-hour or so, so I judge he’s somewhere about with Master Charlie ; but if Master Charlie want him, Sally can lay the table to-day.’

‘Soft-hearted old fellow,’ said Mr. Lawrence, as he turned away, ‘he is desperately afraid of Jack’s getting a scolding after all ; and as for saying “no” to Charlie, I am afraid he will find that a very difficult matter, unless he is very much provoked.’

So saying, Mr. Lawrence opened the door of Charlie’s study, and looked in.

Sure enough, there were the two boys with their heads together over a dictionary, and the table strewn with school-books and papers.

Jack started to his feet and coloured as his master entered ; and when he said, a little gravely, ‘James is wanting you, Jack,’ the boy vanished at once, looking somewhat confused.

‘What an old muff James is !’ grumbled Charlie, as his father sat down by him ; ‘Jack is helping *me*.’

‘Well, I have no objection to that, at proper times, if he does help you ; but you must not



' Mr. Lawrence opened the door of Charlie's study, and  
looked in.'—Page 68.



encourage him to neglect his regular work, or take him away when James and Sarah want him.'

Charlie's answer was something of a grunt ; but the next moment he burst out with, 'I tell you what, father, it's a regular shame to keep Jack laying tables and cleaning boots and knives, that it is ! Why, if he had been to school as I have, he would have been far before me now ! I say, father, can you keep a secret ?'

'I think so, when it is necessary,' said Mr. Lawrence, with a smile at his son's eagerness.

'Well then, you mustn't tell James, please, because he thinks it all nonsense and waste of time, but Jack knows the whole of his Latin grammar, and he is doing exercises and beginning to construe, and he is getting on first-rate. Now, father, you *mustn't* say he is not to go on, because it would disappoint him horridly, now he's got so far ; and besides, I have got on twice as well myself since I began teaching him. You know my reports have been ever so much better ; and it's almost all thanks to Jack ; and if James keeps him away, I shall never get through my holiday task, I know I shan't ; it is twice as hard working alone.'

'You may have Jack when he can be spared, but

I have told James that you are always to ask him first,' said Mr. Lawrence. 'It is bad for Jack to neglect his duty, whatever it may be ; and at present, it is certainly his first duty to black boots and do whatever else James bids him ; and you will not be doing him any kindness if you teach him to despise these things—quite the contrary. I am very glad to see that you are beginning to do your own duty with all your might ; but don't hinder Jack from doing his.'

'Very well,' said Charlie, with a wriggle ; 'but I say, father, you aren't going to row Jack, are you ? because, you know, it is my fault. He said several times that James would want him, but I would not let him go.'

'Well, Charlie,' said his father kindly, 'I am glad you have told me that ; for though I did not mean to "row" Jack, as you are pleased to call it, I certainly was going to give him a hint that he could not be allowed to neglect his work, as he seems to have done since you came home this time. However, I suppose the boy really may have been puzzled as to what he ought to do, and no doubt his inclinations lead him to the study rather than the pantry. But now, I want you to listen seri-

ously to me for a few minutes. You are past fourteen now, Charlie, and I ought to be able to talk to you as if you were a sensible person, whom I can make a friend of, and not a thoughtless child. You know that your education costs a great deal, and will cost more still when you go to Cambridge, as I hope you will some day. Now I have not been able to save much money at present ; and if I were to die shortly, there would be only just enough for you and your mother to live comfortably upon, and for you to complete your education with. Just think how it would be if you had made Jack discontented and filled his mind with the idea of being something more than a servant. However much you might wish it, you would not be able to support him and continue his education ; and what could he do ? I am afraid he would find it quite impossible to make a living by what he has learnt ; whereas, if he understands his duties as a page, he will always be able to keep himself respectably, without being dependent on anyone. And for my own part, Charlie, there are few people for whom I have more respect than a good trustworthy servant like James.'

'Yes, father, I know ; but really and truly Jack

isn't discontented a bit ; and he doesn't want to be anything but a servant. He thought you mightn't like his learning Latin and things, because he wasn't a gentleman ; and so I told him that if we went travelling together, as we used to talk of when we were little boys, he would have to understand things so as to help me. He is such a splendid fellow ! I wish he were my brother, and then you'd do the same for both of us. I say, father,' continued Charlie, starting up, 'do look at his sums ! he is getting on so fast, he will soon be even with me. Why shouldn't you take him into the office ? I'm sure he writes as well as your head clerk, and better than most of them. I say, now, isn't that a first-rate idea ? because he would be in the way of earning his own living, as you say. And if he gets on, as he's sure to do, you could give him his articles, couldn't you ? and perhaps some day he and I should be partners !'

'Well done, my boy ! you go at a very fine pace, I must say,' said Mr. Lawrence, laughing. 'To tell you the truth, I have been thinking of something of the sort for some time past, though I had not got on quite as far or as fast as you. You see, Charlie, when I brought Jack home here, about seven years

ago, though he seemed a quick, bright little fellow, I could not tell what he might turn out, and I did not at all know what I should do with him. All that I thought of at the time was to save him from a miserable life, and to give him the opportunity of growing up a good, honest, hard-working man. Well, then we all grew fond of him ; and so I have kept him on from year to year, until I fancy we should all be very sorry to part with him.'

'Then you *will*?' cried Charlie. 'Just see here!' and he opened one exercise book after another that his father might see he was not boasting of his pupil without good cause.

'Well,' said his father, as he turned over the pages in some surprise at what Jack had managed to accomplish, 'go on helping him, by all means, as much as you can, when James can spare him. But mind, my boy, not a word about the articles or the partnership, if you please ; we are a long way from them at present, and I have always found "doe the next thinge" a very excellent motto, and quite sufficient to employ all my energies. If you will take my advice, you won't even tell him about the office ; for I can't take him in for another three or four months, and it might make him restless. You may



tell him, or perhaps I had better do so myself, that I have no objection at all to his going on with his studies, provided he minds his work—you understand ?

‘Yes, father ; and I promise I won’t put the articles into his head. But do you know, I should not be a bit surprised if he were to end by being Lord Chancellor ; there have been some that were no better off than Jack to start with, and I am sure he is clever.’

‘Well, we shall see ; but meantime bear in mind that he will not be the better clerk, or even the better Chancellor, for being a bad servant—quite the contrary. “ *Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Even if it be but cleaning boots and knives, do it as well as ever you can ; and then you may be fit for something more important, not otherwise. Whether Jack ever comes to be Lord Chancellor or not, as long as he does his duty in the state of life to which God has called him, we know that there is such honour and glory awaiting him, one day, as will make any honour he may come to in this world not worth thinking of in comparison.’

‘That was a very nice talk,’ reflected Charlie, when he was left to himself. ‘I am glad that father

talks to me as if I were a friend, and not only a schoolboy.'

From that time there was no further trouble with James ; for Jack had been told whose orders he was to obey, and Charlie found that, provided he treated James and Sarah with proper respect, no difficulty at all was made about his having Jack at any reasonable time.

## V.

### A TERRIBLE TROUBLE.

BY the time the next holidays came round, Jack had been promoted to a stool in his master's office; and, as it was not convenient for him to be living so far from his work as he would have been at the Grove, he was boarding with a respectable family nearer the town, much to Charlie's disgust, as he had not foreseen that this would be one of the consequences of Jack's promotion.

However, Mr. Lawrence arranged that the boys should see a good deal of one another, and have time to continue their studies together, as he thought it good for them both; and while Charlie was at home he gave Jack a good many holidays, all of which were spent at the Grove.

Jack was going on most satisfactorily; had speedily learnt to copy with exactness, and showed that he had a remarkably good head for figures.

He was making the most of his leisure, too, and

was studying diligently, with the help of a town schoolmaster whom Mr. Lawrence engaged to give him lessons two or three evenings in the week.

Books were very expensive luxuries in those days, and were not to be had for a few pence, as is the case now ; but still, Jack was getting quite a collection of useful works, for all his savings were spent at the second-hand book-shop ; and Charlie often contrived to buy him a volume, knowing that this was a present Jack liked better than any other.

Charlie kept his promise to his father honourably, and never even hinted to Jack that he might get his articles given him some day, and become a lawyer himself ; and the idea of such a thing never so much as entered Jack's head, for he was perfectly satisfied as he was.

As the years went on, he was advanced step by step, however, and became more and more useful to his master ; but whenever Charlie, who was much more ambitious for him than he was for himself, began to talk about the future—as he did now and then, just for the fun of hearing what Jack would say—the answer was always the same. All that he desired was to be clerk to Mr. Charles.

Whereupon ' Mr. Charles ' smiled and chuckled,

and had the greatest difficulty in refraining from telling Jack that with his abilities he might do anything he chose; '*anything*,' he said enthusiastically to himself, for he had boundless faith in the possibilities of Jack's future.

Time went on unmarked by any special events, and when Charlie Lawrence had finished his school career, and was preparing for the University, Jack—or John Lloyd, as he was called in the office—was advanced to the post of confidential clerk, with a good salary, quite sufficient to maintain him respectably.

Mr. Lawrence had had every reason to be well pleased with his conduct, and was assured that he might trust him fully and entirely; while the interest which he had felt in him from his babyhood had only deepened and strengthened as years went on, until, now that Jack had arrived at manhood, his master's affection for him was only second to that which he felt for his own son.

He gratefully acknowledged to himself, also, that Jack's example had been most useful to Charlie in stimulating him to work; and that it was in great measure owing to him that Charlie had done as well as he had.

Yes, he had been repaid abundantly for rescuing the ragged, neglected child ; and as for Jack, he had not been spoilt by notice : he was modest and unassuming, gave himself no airs, and never presumed on his master's favour. As a child he had had a remarkably winning manner, in spite of the uncouthness of his speech ; and now he not only spoke as correctly as Charlie, but was a favourite with most of those who came to the office for his pleasant, civil ways.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Lawrence to himself, as he rode home one evening, thinking of all that had come and gone since first he and Jack had come across one another ; ‘Jack is one of Nature’s gentlemen without doubt, and he has uncommonly good abilities. Whether he will ever arrive at the Woolsack, I can’t pretend to guess ; but without being as sanguine as Charlie, I have no doubt he will make a first-rate lawyer ; a good-looking one he will certainly be, for he is as fine a young fellow as one often sees. I think I will tell Charlie that he shall have his articles at once.’

Jack had been confidential clerk for above a year now, and was becoming more useful every day ; and, as Mr. Lawrence passed the spot where

Mrs. Lloyd's miserable hovel had once stood, and thought of the life from which he had been saved, he felt a warm glow of gratitude that it had been put into his heart, and that he had had the power, to 'be a neighbour to him.'

How little he had guessed what his taking of little Jack-by-the-Hedge into his house would lead to !

His one idea then had been to save him from the gaol which seemed his almost certain fate ; and now there was absolutely no reason why Jack should not do as well in the world as his own son. And, better far than this, Jack was not only honest and upright and diligent—even a heathen might be all that—but Jack was so, he believed, *because* he was earnest in serving not only the master on earth, but the Master in heaven.

Mr. Lawrence was thinking of all this very thankfully, as he rode home.

Far, indeed, was he from guessing how soon and how terribly his dreams as to Jack's future would be changed.

He was quite unsuspecting of any evil, and yet it was coming surely towards him ; and before many hours were past, that had happened which

seemed likely to ruin Jack's prospects for life at the very moment when they were most promising.

Trouble met him at the turn of the road, in the shape of a gentleman, also on horseback, who pulled up for a few minutes' conversation.

There was nothing at all alarming, however, in Mr. Bryant's appearance—quite the contrary; he was a good-natured-looking man, and Mr. Lawrence rather liked him than otherwise.

On the present occasion they exchanged a few words about the weather and the crops; also about affairs in India, which were just then engrossing a good deal of public attention; and then they said 'Good-evening,' and were about to ride on their several ways, when Mr. Lawrence unluckily be-thought him of certain accounts which would have to be made up in a day or two, and remembered that there was a small sum of money, perhaps a couple of sovereigns, still due from Mr. Bryant.

He reminded him of the fact accordingly, just as they were riding off.

Whereupon Mr. Bryant turned his horse sharp round and said curtly, for though kind-hearted, he was an irritable man, especially where money was concerned, 'I paid that three weeks ago!'



'I beg your pardon, sir ; I was looking through the list not more than a couple of hours since, and I noted you down as one of the defaulters : can't let you off !'

Mr. Lawrence spoke jestingly, being half amused at the good man's very blunt manner of speaking, but without the least intention of provoking him.

But the matter was no jest to Mr. Bryant, and waxing very red in the face, he said :

'If the amount has not been entered, it is your clerk's fault ; perhaps he has pocketed it. Anyway, I am as certain that I paid it as that I am talking to you at this moment !'

'Which clerk did you pay ?' asked Mr. Lawrence a little more gravely, but still feeling comfortably certain that the man was mistaken.

'Your precious confidential clerk, to be sure—John Lloyd !' said he rudely.

But at that Mr. Lawrence merely smiled. Jack's accounts were always right. Of course he *might* make a mistake or an oversight ; but he would have found it out and put it right long ago. He had never found him wrong yet ; and as for Mr. Bryant, he *had* made and stuck to some trifling error only a few months previously, and had been by no

means pleased when proved wrong by this same John Lloyd.

No doubt he had a little spiteful feeling against the lad; and of course he had made another mistake.

‘There must be some mistake,’ said the lawyer quietly. ‘I will inquire into it to-morrow, and let you know.’

Why could not Mr. Bryant hold his tongue, and go on his way satisfied with that promise from a man whom he knew to be true and just in all his dealings? But no! he had seen the smile, and it had provoked him; it was so confident, it said so plainly, as he thought, that the lawyer believed the mistake to be Mr. Bryant’s own, though he was too polite to say so; and he retorted angrily:

‘An odd sort of mistake! there ought to be no mistake possible if your clerk knows his duties. Perhaps he has made so much of a mistake as to fancy the money was his own.’

It was the second time something of the sort had been said, and it was more than Mr. Lawrence could stand patiently. Jack, who was honesty itself, take a farthing that did not belong to him! He would as soon mistrust his own son Charlie! The idea was absurd, preposterous! but if it got

about in the town—and Mr. Bryant was not famous for discretion—it might damage Jack's character, and do infinite harm. Therefore Mr. Lawrence felt bound to protest against it, and he did so warmly; too warmly, as he afterwards sorrowfully admitted.

The discussion grew more and more angry; until at last Mr. Lawrence rode off, with an indignant warning to Mr. Bryant to beware how he took away the character of honest folks, and an assurance that the matter should be seen into without delay.

'Ay, that it shall! I'll have it sifted to the bottom before I'm many hours older,' returned the other.

Mr. Lawrence just caught the words, but the next moment he was quite out of hearing.

His reflections during the remainder of his ride were not very pleasant, for he felt that he had lost his temper. And he saw, too, that if only he had remained cool, he might have investigated the matter himself quietly, without any disturbance; whereas now, Mr. Bryant was so exasperated that he would insist on taking part in the inquiry. And if anyone in the office *were* to blame, it would be extremely uncomfortable for all parties.



'The discussion grew more and more angry: until at last  
Mr. Lawrence rode off.'—Page 86.



Of course it could not be Jack ; but, as Mr. Bryant was so positive, he might perhaps have paid the money to some one, and only have made a mistake as to the person.

‘What an old ass that Bryant is!’ was Charlie’s comment when he had heard his father’s story. ‘Won’t he open his eyes when Jack is an articulated clerk!’

‘Unfortunately he is rather a dangerous man to quarrel with. He will be generous enough to apologize when he is fairly proved to be wrong, I believe ; but in the meantime, while he is resenting a fancied wrong, he will go and tell everybody he meets, I am afraid. I wish I had let him say his say without contradiction, and then he would have held his tongue ; whereas now, if I know anything of him, by the time I get to the office to-morrow he will have been there blustering and making such a fuss that the whole town will hear of it.’

‘Jack is certain to be all right,’ said Charlie composedly.

‘Yes, of course ; but when such things get about, they do harm. It is most unfortunate that I have that appointment about old Dyce’s will to-morrow ; I shall hardly get to the office by eleven, and there is time for plenty of mischief before that. I only hope

Jack will keep his temper better than I did mine ; and I wish that I had turned back and seen him at once.'

'Look here, father, shall I go and see him the first thing, and keep him away from the office till you get there?' said Charlie, eager to be doing something.

'Why, no ; I think not, thank you, Charlie. I am afraid it would not mend matters if you and Mr. Bryant were to meet just now.'

'Then why shouldn't I go now and fetch Jack over here? then you could hear all about it from him, and write old Bryant a jolly good stinger for his breakfast to-morrow morning. See, it's hardly six, and we should be back here before nine. Oh, I don't care about dinner! I had ever such a lunch, as the mother will tell you ; and Jack and I can have supper together.'

'Well, perhaps it might be best ; I could tell Jack what to do if Mr. Bryant does get to the office before me. And see, here are the keys ; perhaps you had better go round to the office and bring the account-book, in case I should have made a mistake myself, though it seems impossible. Jack will know which book it is ; and Charlie, if you should

happen to meet Mr. Bryant, don't be aggressive ; leave him to me.'

'Very well ; I should dearly like to give it him hot and strong, but I won't, if you'd rather not.'

'Certainly, I had *much* rather not,' said his father, with an amused smile ; for Charlie was still very boyish, although he had already been one term at Cambridge.

As he ran upstairs he met his mother, just told her briefly where he was going, and without waiting to explain or to answer her astonished query with anything but 'Father'll tell you,' rushed helter-skelter up to his room ; and in another minute was to be heard flying down the back-stairs on his way to the stable, and very soon after trotted away down the avenue.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lawrence was hearing from her husband an account of what had passed, and quite approved of Charlie's expedition ; for she too was much attached to Jack, and as angry as anyone else that he should be so unjustly accused.

While they took their accustomed stroll in the garden after dinner they did little but talk about the two 'boys,' as they still called them, going back to the time when Jack had first been intro-



duced to the Grove, recalling various little incidents in the lives of both, and rejoicing that they both promised to do so well.

When they went indoors Mr. Lawrence had two or three business-letters to write ; and when these were finished they began to listen for the sound of horse's hoofs. It was nine o'clock—past nine o'clock—and still they did not come !

Jack might have been out, and Charlie was certain not to come back without seeing him.

Meanwhile, the room Jack always occupied had been got ready, and supper was laid in the dining-room.

'There was no cause whatever for the least alarm,' so they said to one another, for it was a bright moonlight night, and the road was good and perfectly safe ; and yet both father and mother began to feel a little vague uneasiness, which neither liked to confess to the other.

At last, just as the clock was going to strike ten, the welcome sound was heard ; but Charlie was apparently in no hurry, for he was walking the horse up the drive.

'Talking all the way and inveighing against that unfortunate Bryant, no doubt,' said Mr. Lawrence,

with a smile, as he went out into the hall to let the boys in himself.

James, who had also heard the arrival, was waiting outside to take the horse ; but there was no Jack visible. He was behind though, no doubt !

Charlie dismounted wearily, as if his ride had tired him in a most unusual manner ; and, quite unlike himself, he had no joke for James, no single word even but 'Good-night,' which was uttered in a low, subdued tone, as if he had some difficulty in getting it out at all.

Silently he went up to his father and put his hand in his ; but when Mr. Lawrence moved towards the drawing-room, saying with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling, so much Charlie's manner alarmed him : 'Well, my boy, you'll be glad of your supper ; Jack is on his way, I suppose ? I'll just tell your mother ;' the only answer was a hoarse, 'Not in there !' and drawing his father into the study, Charlie dropped into the first chair, as if he were utterly exhausted, and burying his face in his hands, actually sobbed, as he had not done since he was a little schoolboy.

'My dear boy, do pray try and tell me what is the matter,' said his father presently, after waiting in vain for a word.

‘Promise that you won’t prosecute,’ said Charlie in a half-stifled voice, making a great effort at self-command, but with very partial success.

‘*Prosecute?*’ repeated his father, in utter consternation and amazement; ‘prosecute—*whom?*’

‘Jack!’

It was a sob, rather than an articulate word, and Mr. Lawrence could hardly believe that he had heard aright; while Charlie again broke down utterly and helplessly.

In a minute or two, however, he struggled to say:

‘That brute Bryant says you must and shall.’

‘Mr. Bryant will leave me to manage my own affairs; but, Charlie, what—what does it all mean?’

‘Oh, father! I don’t *know*, I don’t seem to know *anything*,’ said poor Charlie wearily, in a broken voice; ‘only Jack—never meant—you know—he would have paid it back—next week.’

‘Then he did receive the money—and—spent it?’

Mr. Lawrence’s tone was full of pain, and Charlie could not find any voice at all to answer with. Neither of them could have felt it more had Jack really been a son of the house.

‘But,’ said Mr. Lawrence presently, ‘it is quite inexplicable—quite. He never took a farthing that

was not his own before, and he has a good salary ; and surely he knows that I would have advanced his next quarter, if there was any reason, or I would have *given* him the money—ay, ten times over—if he was in want of it. He hasn't been getting into debt or gambling, surely ?

‘Oh, no, no ! not that.’

And now, if this story were fiction, and Jack a perfect hero, of course it would turn out that, in some way or other, Jack was not to blame ; and, however much appearances might be against him for the time, it would prove in the end, either that he was the victim of some wicked plot, or that in mistaken generosity he was taking the blame which rightly belonged to some one else.

But John Lloyd was a real person, and this is a true history. And, as most true histories contain some unpleasant facts, we must, alas ! confess that, upright as Jack had always been up to this unhappy time, upright as he showed himself ever afterwards, in this one instance he was undoubtedly guilty — guilty, that is, not of intentional dishonesty, but of very great carelessness, to say the least of it. He had had no excuses to make, and had attempted none.

Mr. Bryant had met him one day, just as he was

leaving the office in a great hurry, and had handed him the money in question, which Jack had put in his pocket. He had intended to take it out directly he got back, but had forgotten to do so, and had forgotten also to make any entry of it.

Other things had driven it out of his head, and then he had come across an old dictionary, which he was anxious to secure, lest anyone else should snap it up; and finding that he had money in his pocket, had paid for it on the spot, without realizing in the least that the money was not his own. When he did remember, he found to his dismay that his own funds were so low that he should not be able to replace it until his salary was paid.

More than once he thought of telling his master what he had inadvertently done; but Mr. Lawrence happened to be unusually busy, and Jack was so conscious of his own honesty of purpose that, though he was vexed with himself for his carelessness, he did not think it a matter of very great consequence, as there were but a few days to quarter-day, when he would be able to make all straight.

When Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Bryant had parted, however, the latter had gone off at once to the clerk, and had taxed him with appropriating the



'He had come across an old dictionary which he was anxious to secure.'—Page 96.



money. And then first, it had flashed upon Jack how the world in general regarded such conduct as his had been.

‘Embezzlement!’ said Mr. Bryant, who was not accustomed to mince matters when he was irritated; ‘that’s what it is, embezzlement! and I suppose you have been long enough in a lawyer’s office to know the meaning of that! After the way in which your master has treated me, I shall take care that he doesn’t let you off, I promise you! I’ll have justice!’

Poor Jack turned sick and white as he heard the words, for, as he knew well enough, embezzlement meant transportation!

‘The brute!’ said Charlie savagely, as he brought his halting narrative to an end. ‘Well, father, he *is* a brute, if ever there was one. *Anybody* might know how it happened, if he chose!’

‘Anybody who knew Jack,’ corrected his father; ‘but your mother will be wondering what has happened, and you had better come to your supper.’

‘Oh no!’ said Charlie, shrinking back; ‘I don’t want anything, and I can’t see her to-night. I should only—only make a fool of myself.’

Then, after a moment’s pause, he went on



earnestly : ' Father, it won't make any *difference*, will it ? he can be articted all the same ?' .

' Indeed, my boy, I don't know,' was the sorrowful answer. ' I could overlook it, if it concerned myself only ; but I have the care of other people's money, and I am afraid Bryant won't let the matter rest.'

' He can't make you prosecute ?' asked Charlie, in alarm.

' No, you may make yourself easy on that score ; but if only he had not found out the truth, I might simply have told him I was mistaken, and there would have been an end of it so far as he is concerned. By-the-bye, did you bring the book ?'

' Yes, and I made Jack enter old Bryant's payment ; and here are the two sovereigns—yes, they're mine, but I told Jack I would. Oh, I wish he had told me before ! I'd do anything to disappoint that old shark ! Couldn't you show him the book to satisfy him, and just say it was all a mistake from beginning to end, and you won't tell him any more ?'

' I am afraid he would not be so easily convinced ; besides, Jack has admitted to him that he had received the money and not accounted for it.'

‘ But Jack *might* have found out afterwards that he had made a mistake, and had only put it away somewhere ; such things have happened, and it’s no concern of Bryant’s how it has been set right, so long as he hasn’t to pay twice.’

‘ Well, I hope he won’t *make* it some concern of his, but—but come, we won’t talk of it any more to-night ; I only know I would sooner have lost a thousand pounds than have this happen.’

## VI.

### WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

THE three who met at breakfast next morning at the Grove looked as if they had none of them had much sleep, and it was a very silent meal ; for Charlie, who was usually the life of the party, was as heavy-eyed as if he had not been to bed at all, and seemed too utterly cast down to speak a single unnecessary word.

The same subject occupied all three minds, but they could not bring themselves to speak of it together at present ; and as they could not think of anything else, after two or three vain attempts at making conversation they gave it up as impossible.

But when Mr. Lawrence rose from the table, Charlie followed him into the hall to say : ‘ I promised to see Jack to-day ; you know I—I can’t let him think I am going to desert him.’

‘ To be sure not,’ said Mr. Lawrence briskly ; for the sight of Charlie’s usually merry face now

looking so entirely dejected and wretched made him inclined to put the best face he could upon the matter. 'To be sure not! But Charlie, lad, you must pluck up heart yourself, if you are to be any help to poor Jack; and I fancy he will *want* help. Now, look here: that it is a serious matter, I don't deny; but what is the difference between a good man and a bad? The best of us is constantly falling, and the better he is, the more conscious he is of his falls; but "the just man falleth seven times and *riseth up again*," while the bad one falls lower and lower—that is the great difference. I believe we may call Jack 'just' in spite of this fall, and I don't doubt that with God's help he will rise again. If he takes it rightly, as I trust he will, it may be the means of curing him of his carelessness, the only real fault I have ever had to complain of.'

'And what are you going to do?'

'That I can't yet tell. I must see him, and then judge what will be best; but, my boy, you may be sure that, after having known him pretty nearly all his life, I am not going to give him up the first time he disappoints me. Come to me at the office about two o'clock; perhaps by that time I shall be able to tell you better, and you can take Jack out

for a walk, or bring him over here if you like. But for Jack's own sake be as cheerful as you can, or people will be fancying things worse than they are. And now I haven't another moment to spare!

That was a very strange morning to Charlie. He could not fix his attention sufficiently to go on with his reading to any purpose ; in fact, he could not do anything but wander aimlessly about in the garden, until his mother had finished her house-keeping and came out to him.

He felt a little better when they had talked the sad business over together ; and gradually his spirits rose, until, as he lay on the grass at her feet, while she was busy with her needle-work, he began to indulge the hope that things might go on as before, and that, after a certain time of probation, Jack might still be articled to his father, as already arranged.

By the time he started for the office he was almost cheerful, and ready to believe that there must be *some* way out of the trouble without going *through* it.

Perhaps, after all, it was only some extraordinary mistake, and Jack would find that he had actually only spent his own money and had put the other

so carefully away that he had forgotten where it was. He had heard or read of such things; or perhaps some malicious person had seen Mr. Bryant give him the money at the door of the office, and had picked his pocket the moment after, and Jack was accusing himself wrongfully.

But when he went to his father's private room and saw his grave, sad face, he was speedily recalled to the real state of the case.

'Well, I have seen poor Jack,' said he, in answer to his son's look of inquiry, 'and really he seems as much puzzled to account for his conduct as I am myself. The first mistake was his not coming back to enter the payment and put away the money directly Mr. Bryant gave it him; but why on earth he didn't tell me when he found out what he had done, I can't imagine—neither can he, it seems. I suppose there was a little pride at the bottom of it; his accounts have always been so correct that he did not like to say they were wrong. I dare say, too, he did not like to vex me, poor fellow. It is done, however, and can't be undone, and we must make the best of it.'

'And has Mr. Bryant been?'

'Indeed he has! He was here by ten o'clock,

blustering about what he should do, and making such a disturbance that every one, down to the office-boy, knows all about it, and it will be impossible for Jack to stay here.'

'I should like to wring his neck!' said Charlie ferociously.

'I am to blame myself for losing my temper; but for that, it might have been kept quiet. Bryant came again when I got here; and, to do him justice, when I had explained it quietly, and he saw how much cut up I was at losing Jack, he really was sorry for having been so hasty. But unluckily the mischief is done past undoing, and I am sorely puzzled what to do for the best. I could not get Jack into another office without saying why I had parted with him, and—well, I must think about it. Meantime, I want you to do all you can to keep Jack from thinking that it is all up with him, because of this one slip. He is terribly distressed and mortified, poor fellow, as is only natural! but there is no need for him to think that he must go to the dogs. The Bible never tells any penitent sinner, however bad he may have been, to go about hopelessly hanging down his head all the rest of his days. It bids his brethren "restore such an one in the

spirit of meekness, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted ;" it tells them to forgive and comfort him, "that he may not be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow ;" and to the thief it says, "Let him that stole, steal no more."'

'But, father,' exclaimed Charlie, aghast, 'Jack is not——'

'Not in intention, Charlie, I am glad and thankful to believe ; and *you* know that I am far from wishing to exaggerate ; but, as a matter of fact, there is no denying that he made use of what was not his own, and concealed that he had done so ; and the law does not and cannot take account of intentions. We had better look it straight in the face, and see what mere carelessness, which we are apt to consider a little fault, may lead to. I am afraid many a man has worn a convict's dress for quite as small a matter, though he may have been as innocent of evil intentions as I am sure Jack was. But what should I have thought if one of the other clerks, of whom I know less, had acted in this way ? In justice to them, I cannot keep him here ; and I know that the mere sending him away will be punishment more than enough to make him remember it all his life, poor fellow. I wish, indeed,



that I could spare him, though perhaps it would not be the truest kindness after all. But I depend upon you to help him to bear it like a man, and a Christian man. And remember, it will only add to his pain if he sees you despairing and miserable.'

'I am afraid,' Mr. Lawrence presently went on with a sigh, 'I am afraid we are all often guilty of sins far worse in the sight of God, such as evil tempers and so on ; but in this instance carelessness has led to what happens to be an offence of which the law takes account, and therefore the world judges it severely, and with very little regard for intentions. But you had better go now, and encourage him all you can, and make him understand that I have not lost confidence in him, and the braver and more cheerful he is, the better I shall be pleased. I know that he is heartily sorry, and that is enough.'

So Charlie departed to Jack's lodging, feeling that he had never had such a hard task set him in all his life before ; and he was received with the dejected remark : 'It's good of you to come, Mr. Charles ; I—I was afraid the master would never let me see you again when he knew.'

'Of course I should come,' returned Charlie

rather indignantly, for lack of any other safe outlet for his feelings. 'You don't suppose I desert a fellow the first time he's in a scrape, I hope.'

And then with some little difficulty Jack, who felt ashamed to be seen by anybody, was persuaded to go for a long walk on a lonely road, where, except on market-day, they were not likely to meet anyone who would know them. And when once Charlie had got him there, he did his best to follow out his father's directions to the best of his power, by racking his brains for all the instances he could think of, of men who had risen to honourable positions after some great failure in early life. There was no end to the boys whom he had known or heard of, who, though they had been expelled from school, were now doing extremely well in the world ; and besides these, there were sundry others, historical characters, who had begun life by disgracing themselves and their families, and yet had ended by being eminent men, honoured and trusted by all.

Thus he went on, until at last Jack said, with something of a smile, that according to him, it would really seem as if most of the great men of the world had begun by being rogues.

‘Well, Jack, of course you know I didn’t mean you were a bit like them, except in having got into a horrid scrape, which was just a sort of accident that might happen to anybody. Why, old Bryant himself made a mistake, not so long ago.’

‘Yes, but he does not think it was at all the same thing ; and I know well enough that almost anybody but the master would have prosecuted me, and then where should I have been ? But what cuts me most is, that I have in a way disgraced him before Mr. Bryant and the other clerks : they all knew he trusted me. And then you see I don’t want to be anything great ; and if I did, I don’t see how I can be. But I did think I might have gone on in the office all my life, and have been your clerk some day ; and now I can’t *ever*, if I live to be a hundred. That’s it ; there’s no undoing it ! I can’t think why I was such a fool as not to tell the master when I found it out !’

‘Bless you, Jack,’ said Charlie impetuously, ‘it will all blow over and be forgotten in a little while.’

‘But I can’t forget it ; and what’s more, I oughtn’t. Whatever can have come over me, I can’t think ! It seems as if I must have been

dreaming. I say, Mr. Charles, the master seemed to say he'd try and get me a place somewhere away, and it's very good of him ; but, do you think he'd let me come back to the Grove after a while, and be footman or something ? I don't suppose I have forgotten how to wait at table ; and I could be much more useful to James with the horses than I was before.'

But Charlie's answer to this was simply 'Stuff!' uttered in a very husky voice.

After a minute, he cleared his throat and went on : 'It won't do, Jack ; you're much too good for that sort of work now ; and if you don't know it, I do. Oh yes ; I know what it feels like now, as if you could never do anything all your life ; but you will, see if you don't ! Look here, old boy, you're not going to disappoint my father and me after all we've thought of you ; don't you believe it ! If I did, I should—well, I should hate old Bryant worse than I do now ! Father is sure to think of something, and it will be the best thing, whatever it is ; and I shouldn't wonder if some day, when I'm in the office, you were there too, after all !

In this way, and by every other argument he could think of, Charlie tried to cheer poor Jack ;

but it was rather hard work, and, by the time he reached home, he was fairly tired out.

He had not been able to persuade him to come with him, which was hardly to be wondered at ; but he had the satisfaction of telling his father, that whereas Jack had begun by talking wildly of going quite away from the neighbourhood and taking any sort of place he could get, as a labourer if he could get nothing better, he had at last been convinced that to do this would not at all mend matters so far as his friends were concerned ; quite the contrary, for, instead of being any relief, it would be a very real addition to the trouble he had brought upon them. And at last he had promised not to do anything desperate, but to wait patiently for whatever 'the master' might think best for him.

Like most people, Charlie had plenty of common-sense at the service of his friend. But, though he could encourage Jack, he did not find it easy to keep up his own spirits in private.

The next two or three days were spent much as the first one had been, in long walks and talks ; but after that Mr. Lawrence sent both the boys off to a cottage he had at Rock Point, a small fishing

village on the coast, where they had spent a holiday or two before, and would find plenty to occupy and interest them.

For Jack was humbled to the dust in his own eyes, and Mr. Lawrence's great fear was that his very honesty and the good character he had borne hitherto would lead him to exaggerate his fault and make him despair of ever regaining his master's confidence and esteem. As Mr. Lawrence well knew, the devil has no more dangerous weapon in his armoury than despair. He may persuade a man to think little of a sin until it is committed ; he will even persuade him that it is no sin at all. But no sooner is it done past undoing than he very often takes another tack, and represents the evil deed as too bad for forgiveness ; and terrible indeed is the case of those who are deceived by him.

The great thing was to make Jack feel that he had not by any means fallen past recovery, and before he sent him off to Rock Point, Mr. Lawrence had a long talk with him, which he wound up by saying : ' Now, Jack, I expect you to be a credit to me ; and take this one piece of advice with you : don't be so conceited as to suppose that

you can get to the top of the ladder without a tumble. No mere human son of Adam ever did, or ever will. But what then? We must be cheerful and patient even about our falls. Maybe we needed humbling, and teaching not to trust in ourselves and our own strength; and it is good for us sometimes to realize something of the sin we might fall into if we were left to ourselves. But then we are *not* left to ourselves; and in His strength we cannot trust too much, for He is able to keep us from falling, and He will if we will let Him. Your fall happens to have been of a particularly mortifying sort; but, though I have seldom had occasion to find fault with you, I suppose perhaps you have been a little careless sometimes before?

‘Yes, sir,’ said Jack humbly; ‘there was that time I forgot to post a letter you gave me; something put it out of my head, and I put it in my pocket and forgot it, just the same as——’

‘*Exactly*; only, because it was a letter, and not money, though you were angry with yourself, you were not mortified, because you knew no one could suspect you of intending to keep it. Well, now, you may remember for your comfort that I am

perfectly certain you no more intended to keep the one than the other. Your great mistake was in not telling me the moment you found out what you had done. And now we need never say another word about the matter, and I hope and believe that you will some day come back here and be able to hold up your head before everybody. There is just one thing more; you can help me very much, if you will.'

'Yes, sir,' said Jack, looking up with something of his old briskness. 'I'll do anything I can. I—I'd sweep the office, if I might.'

'I believe you would, my boy; but that is not what I want. Mr. Charles is very much attached to you, as you know, and I feel that your example has been useful to him; for he is not naturally as fond of books as you are. Now you may have to stay some weeks at Rock Point, and it is very important that he should not spend all the time in idleness; and indeed it will be much better for you both to have a few hours of work every day. I can lend you some law-books if you like, and if he sees you bent on working, he will do the same; whereas, if you do nothing but lament over the past, I am afraid he will think it unkind not to do



the same ; and so, not only will his reading come off badly, but you will neither of you get the good you might from the change. Make up your mind to set to steadily at something, and let him see that you are not going to give in. I shall come down and see how you are getting on before long, and if I find you looking bright and cheerful, mind—I shall not misunderstand.'

'Yes, sir, I *will*,' said Jack heartily. And though it was hard work now and then to repress some bitter lamentations at the ruin of all his hopes, Jack kept his word bravely, and was glad to feel that there was still something which he could do to show his gratitude to his master.

## VII.

### GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

JACK had no idea what Mr. Lawrence was going to do, or indeed what he *could* do for him; but in the meanwhile he strove to be patient and cheerful, and to make the best use of his time; and when Mr. Lawrence came down, according to his promise, he was pleased to find that his advice had been faithfully followed, and that though poor Jack coloured painfully on first seeing him, both the lads had well-nigh recovered their usual spirits.

‘The master’ brought startling news with him.

A regiment of volunteers was shortly going to India, under the command of a friend of his own; and he now proposed that Jack should join it.

These volunteers, it must be remembered, were not like the enlisted rank and file of the period. These were men of education and some small private means, who, from a love of adventure and a spirit of enterprise, chose thus to go and seek their fortunes abroad.

Jack's eyes sparkled at the very idea of joining them. He had always had a great wish to see something of the world ; and though he was grieved at the thought of leaving the only friends he had, still he felt that this was just the opportunity he wanted of making a fresh start in life, and he thankfully accepted it.

A few weeks more, and Jack was gone, with many promises that he would write on the first opportunity, and with many predictions from Charlie that in the course of time he would rise to be Commander-in-Chief of the Indian forces. He was very sorry to lose his friend, but very much excited at his prospects, full of expectation that he would distinguish himself, and only sorry that he could not fulfil the dream of their boyhood by going too.

Then followed a very long time without any news whatever ; but the letter which came at last was a long one, and well worth having ; and it is easy to imagine the interest with which it was read by all at the Grove.

What was still more satisfactory was that Mr. Lawrence also had a letter from Colonel Thompson, in which he expressed himself as well satisfied with

Jack ; and said, moreover, that he had formed a high opinion of his character and abilities, and meant to keep his eye on him.

‘Ay,’ said Charlie, on hearing this, ‘I knew it ! I knew Jack would make his way, wherever he went, for he is just one of a thousand !’

A year or two passed, bringing occasional letters, in which Jack gave most vivid descriptions of the various stirring scenes in which his regiment had taken part ; and now and again a letter came from the Colonel, who took a real interest in his men, and declared that Jack was one of the most trustworthy in the regiment. Step by step he had promoted him as far as he could, until at last Jack’s gallantry at the storming of a fort had won him still greater promotion, and a commission had been promised him.

Once more Jack’s prospects were good, and there seemed every likelihood of his rising to distinction in the army ; but Colonel Thompson wrote to say that although ‘Mr. Lloyd’ was a capital soldier, and would no doubt rise in his profession, he could not help thinking, for his own part, that his talents were such as might be turned to better account elsewhere, and he had therefore been strongly

advising him to leave the army and return to England.

‘He has,’ wrote Colonel Thompson, ‘such a ready and eloquent tongue—a real gift of eloquence, I consider, as well as a clear head—that if he has any friends who can afford to send him to the Bar, I have no doubt that he would do well; and there would be a fine opening for him here as soon as he was qualified.’

‘Hurrah for Jack!’ exclaimed Charlie, who happened to be at home when this letter arrived. ‘He’ll come to the Woolsack after all! I know what the Colonel means! Jack always had a gift for talking, even when he was a little chap. He had a way of making you *see* things as if you had been on the spot. Have him home, father, of course, won’t you?’

‘Let us see what Jack himself says.’

Jack wrote that he was quite contented where he was, and that, though of course nothing would delight him more than to see them all again, he should not think of throwing up his commission without advice from Mr. Lawrence.

In his heart of hearts, Mr. Lawrence longed to see the boy again—his ‘second son’ as he sometimes

called him; and feeling that Colonel Thompson was probably right, and that Jack had unusual abilities, he thought it would be safe to yield to Charlie's urgent entreaties and give Jack the opportunity of going to the Bar if he chose.

There was not much doubt as to what Jack's choice would be; and before another twelvemonth had passed he had been welcomed back to the Grove, and settled in London to begin his studies, 'the master,' as he still liked to call him, generously undertaking to provide all the necessary funds.

But Jack had no notion of living upon his friends, if he could do anything to help himself; and he soon found that by copying law papers, etc., he was able to earn enough to supply all his personal wants; while Mr. Lawrence gladly paid fees and the expenses of his legal education.

In vacation-time Jack went down to the Grove or to Rock Point, where Mr. Lawrence had now built a house, and there practised himself in pleading imaginary causes, as he paced up and down the sands, with Charlie for his admiring audience.

And here the history of Jack's boyhood and early youth comes to an end, and all that remains to be told must be said in a few words.

He did not disappoint the promise of his boyhood, or the hopes and expectations of Charlie Lawrence and 'the master;' quite the contrary. But it would take too long to tell in detail how, in due time, he was called to the Bar, and then returned to India, and how, after a while, his friends at home heard of his pleading some small causes with unfailing success; how, by degrees, others of more importance were entrusted to him, until at last a native 'Baboo' employed him in an important law-suit; how Jack was again successful, and how the grateful native, who was rolling in riches, not only paid him handsomely for his services, but presented him with a magnificent set of plate, which was supplied by Rundell and Bridge, the great silversmiths of the day.

From this time Jack's fortune was made; he rose rapidly to distinction, and 'the master' lived long enough to see his ragged little Jack-by-the-Hedge transformed into 'my learned friend, Sir John Lloyd;' for Jack was knighted, was raised to the Bench, and finally became Chief Justice of Bombay, besides receiving many other honours.

'After all,' was Charlie Lawrence's comment to his father in after years, 'after all, Mr. Bryant did

not do Jack such a bad turn, as things have fallen out ! But for him, I suppose he might have been in our office still, for I am sure he would never have left us of his own free will. Oh, *I'm* contented enough here with you, father ; besides, it's my business to sustain the reputation of all the ancient Lawrences, and that's quite enough for me ; but old Jack hadn't a father and grandfather to be proud of, and I'm glad he has made such a name for himself. It reflects great credit on *me*, too, for my discernment ; I always feel that ; and I should have felt cheated if he had not been something out of the common way ; but I knew he would ! I did enjoy presenting old Bryant to "my learned friend, Sir John," and it was grand to hear him calling him "my lord," and to see the profound bow the old fellow made to his judgeship !

Charlie Lawrence was Charlie Lawrence still at heart, though he had been his father's partner for many years now, and had sons and daughters of his own growing up around him.

He, too, had been successful in life, and no lawyer was more looked up to in the whole neighbourhood than he ; and he was proud, for his father's sake, of the respect shown to him, and



proud, too, to know that he was considered a worthy descendant of the old Lawrences, who had been lawyers in the same town for generations past. But he was far more proud of Jack's honours than of his own.

Jack never came to be Lord Chancellor ; but that, as Mr. Lawrence junior always maintained, was simply because he had chosen to practise at the Indian Bar ; and this is what the Lawrence children believed as firmly as their father.

To them Sir John Lloyd was a great hero ; and when at last they actually saw him, and he and two of his boys spent several weeks with them at Rock Point, they were not disappointed. That was a summer never to be forgotten ; for not only did Sir John tell them Indian stories without number, but better still, he was never tired of talking to them about the time when he and their father had been boys together, and of all their various adventures ; and they liked to hear him speak of all the kindness their father and grandfather and grandmother had shown him in the years which seemed to them so far away, for by the light in his face and the tone of his voice they knew how truly he loved them all.



'I did enjoy presenting old Bryant to "my learned friend,  
Sir John."'—Page 123.



How Charlie Lawrence enjoyed that meeting with his old friend, is better imagined than described ; and we must also leave it to our readers to picture to themselves the happy holiday-home which the Lloyd boys found at the Grove, when their father returned to India leaving them to be educated in England.

And when, later on, Sir John's godson, Jack Lawrence, went to India at his invitation to make his way in the Company's service, can they not also imagine how kindly he was received and cared for ? how Sir John felt as if he could never do enough for the son of his old friend, and how Jack Lawrence's father almost envied him for seeing so much of 'old Jack' ?

Those who have read of the great trouble of Jack's early life will be interested to hear that what especially characterized him ever after was his scrupulously strict honesty and justice ; and that, too, at a time when to rob and plunder 'natives' was by many held to be no sin.

This, no doubt, was one chief cause of his success in India ; and of all the many honours he received, surely none was so well worth having as the grateful testimony to his uprightness and righteous

dealing which one of these natives expressed in such terms as the following :

‘We Indians reckon upon every word you say being strictly true, upon every promise being strictly performed, all your actions being regulated by the strictest maxims of good faith ; while we, alas ! not possessing such a rule for our lives, our moral structure falls to pieces, from want of the cementing principle of that good faith which regulates your conduct.’

‘Ah !’ said Charlie Lawrence, now a grey-haired man, as he read these words, ‘how my father would have valued this ! He would have thought more of it than of any titles. But he knew it long ago ! he did not want any Indians or anyone else to tell him that Jack was as true as steel, and as honest as the day ! Dear old Jack !’

THE END.





